

Mr. Francis copy is attached.

To: Mr. Mastroianni

July 28, 1962

Got Mr. Francis
copy 7.20.62

Mr. Metzler, 7.29.62
Miss Kirkwood
8.2.62

CANALETTO - 1697-1768

Get
lexow, her copy

The Cleveland Museum of Art has just accessioned an important painting by the Venetian artist Canaletto, who was a specialist in portraying the life and unique architecture of Venice. The new painting is titled VIEW OF THE PIAZZA SAN MARCO AND THE PIAZZETTA LOOKING TOWARD SAN GIORGIO MAGGIORE. It reflects the special character of 18th century Venice which was at that time what Paris is today - a center of amusement and pleasure. This large canvas presents a panoramic view of the Piazza San Marco.

William George Constable describes the picture as one seen from opposite the Torre dell'Orologio. At the left is the facade of San Marco in sharp perspective, with only one dome visible. Beyond is the Ducal Palace and the Piazzetta, with a partial view of San Giorgio in the distance. At the left center is the Campanile with a penthouse and awnings. Three flagstaffs are seen in front of San Marco with the outer ones each having two canvas booths at their base. Continuing to the right is the Procuratie Nuove and on the extreme right the west end of the Piazza and the facade of San Geminiano, with the campanile of San Moise in the background. A golden light and deep shadows fall on the Piazza from the west and across the foreground from the Procuratie Vecchie. Color is subdued except for touches of blue, red, green and yellow on many figures. Blue-grey sky with warm-tinted clouds is overhead.

In his canvases Canaletto portrayed the specific character of Venice while his contemporaries were inclined to emphasize its romantic qualities. In the finest examples of his work, especially his earlier work, the orderly, formal structure of the architecture and the quiet mood of the lagoons and canals are painted with extraordinary perception. Every complicated detail is included and treated with a lightness which makes them live. Canaletto's skies are bright and luminous. His technique is exceptional in its power to render a brilliant atmosphere - without the aid of a heightened dramatic effect.

Canaletto, whose real name was Giovanni Antonio Canal, was born in Venice in

1697. He learned his trade from his father Bernardo Canal, a theatrical scene-painter. In 1719 Canaletto went to Rome and there was much influenced by the rich styles of Pannini. Some twenty years later he returned to Venice and took a fresh look at this magical city of his birth seeing it as he had never seen it before. He then began painting the canals and the varied aspects of Venetian life which there are so abundant.

At about this time Canaletto came to know Joseph Smith, an Englishman living in Venice. Smith purchased a large number of Canaletto's works for himself and made it possible for English travelers to obtain them. As a result Canaletto's popularity in England grew to such proportions that unscrupulous artists began to imitate his style and copy his work. In 1746 Canaletto decided he must travel to England and establish the identity of his works. He stayed there doing many English scenes until 1755 and then returned to Venice remaining there until his death in 1768.

As the last twilight of the Renaissance glowed Canaletto with Bellotto, Guardi and Marieschi rang down the curtain on the 500 year pageant of Italian art. The spirit of the Renaissance had found its way to Venice slowly - it was even more slow to depart.

The Canaletto acquisition was purchased by the Museum from the Leonard C. Hanna, Jr. Bequest and now hangs in the new accession gallery.

M. 7.25.62 with photo.